

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15615

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SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

1. SUMMARY: IN PRE-DEPARTURE (FOR UNGA) LUNCH FONMIN FORLANI HOPED US TRIP WOULD STRENGTHEN ITALIAN INTERNATIONAL IMAGE. IN US MEETINGS, HE WILL STRESS PERFORMANCE OF ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT IN DIFFICULT SITUATION. HE BELIEVES PCI WILL BE REASONABLE AND HOPES USG WILL ENCOURAGE PSI TO TNER GOVERNMENT. DC PARTY NEEDS UNITY MORE THAN ANYTHING. WE RECOMMEND FORLANI BE TOLD IN US BOTH OF OUR SUPPORT AND OF OUR CONVICTION THAT ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT CAN AND MUST DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH ITALY'S PROBLEMS WITHOUT ARRIVING AT A CONDOMINIUM WITH THE PCI. END SUMMARY.

2. FONMIN ARNALDO FORLANI WILL LEAVE FOR THE US ON SEPTEMBER 26 TO ATTEND UNGA. AT OUR LUNCHEON TOGETHER ON SEPTEMBER 22, HE TOLD ME HOW MUCH HE IS LOOKING FORWARD TO HIS TRIP AND HOW VALUABLE HIS HIGH LEVEL MEETINGS WILL BE IN STRENGTHENING ITALY'S IMAGE WITH ITS INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS. I ASSURED HIM THAT THE USG IS ANXIOUS TO SHOW ITS SUPPORT FOR THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT IN SOME VISIBLE WAY.

3. FORLANI INDICATED THAT IN HIS DISCUSSIONS IN THE US HE WILL EMPHASIZE THE POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS
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OF THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT

OF ITS MINORITY STATUS AND THE PRESENCE OF A VERY STRONG COMMUNIST PARTY. HE BELIEVES THAT THE COMMUNISTS WILL PROBABLY BE QUITE REASONABLE IN THE COMING MONTHS BECAUSE THEY WOULD PREFER NOT TO SEE THE SOCIALISTS GO INTO THE GOVERNMENT. THE FUTURE WILL BECOME CLEARER WHEN PARLIAMENT OPENS NEXT WEEK AND THE VARIOUS PARTIES TAKE MORE CONCRETE POSITIONS.

4. REALIZING THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PSI) WILL HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME REACHING INTERNAL AGREEMENT ON JOINING THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC) IN A COALITION, FORLANI ENCOURAGED US TO DO WHATEVER POSSIBLE TO ENCOURAGE PSI PARTICIPATION. TRIPS TO THE US FOR PSI SECRETARY BETTINO CRAXI AND OTHER SOCIALIST LEADERS COULD BE VERY HELPFUL. THE FONMIN BELIEVES THAT REPUBLICAN LEADER UGO LA MALFA'S STATEMENTS ON THE INEVITABILITY OF A DC-PCI HISTORIC COMPROMISE ARE BASED ON A WORST CASE VIEW WHICH LA MALFA HOPES WILL NEVER BECOME REALITY. NONE THE LESS, SUCH STATEMENTS ARE NOT HELPFUL, AND LA MALFA KNOWS IT. WITHIN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY, LA MALFA CARRIES LITTLE WEIGHT EXCEPT AS A SENIOR STATESMAN. FORLANI HAD DISCUSSED SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC (PSDI) FORTUNES RECENTLY WITH FORMER PARTY SECRETARY MARIO TANASSI, WHO STILL CONTROLS THE RELATIVE MAJORITY (40 PERCENT) OF THE DIRECTORATE. TANASSI BELIEVES SARAGAT MAY STAY ON AS PSDI PARTY SECRETARY GIVEN THE DIFFICULTIES OF AGREEING ON A SUCCESSOR.

5. WITHIN THE DC ITSELF, THE ONGOING ROUND OF MEETINGS AND SEMINARS HAS DONE NO HARM AND MAY DO SOME GOOD PROVIDED THAT THE GATHERINGS DO NOT BECOME DIVISIVE SHOUTING MATCHES. THE PARTY NEEDS UNITY MORE THAN EVER, AND THE DC NATIONAL COUNCIL WILL CONCENTRATE ON THIS WHEN IT MEETS ON OCTOBER 7 AND 8. THIS IMPORTANT MEETING WILL SET THE TONE FOR DC PROGRAMS IN THE COMING MONTHS.

6. WITH THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE IN A STAGE OF TRANSITION, MANY IMPORTANT DECISIONS MUST BE MADE IN CONFIDENTIAL

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THE COMING MONTHS. GIVEN FORLANI'S KEY ROLES IN BOTH HIS PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT HIS VIEWS WILL CARRY HEAVY WEIGHT. IT IS THEREFORE VITAL THAT HIS HIGH LEVEL MEETINGS IN THE US BE USED AS OPPORTUNITIES TO CONVEY POINTS SUCH AS THE FOLLOWING:

A. THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT HAS AN OPPORTUNITY,

PERHAPS THE LAST ONE, TO FORMULATE A PROGRAM OF ECONOMIC STABILIZATION AND SOCIAL REFORM CAPABLE OF REVERSING THE PRESENT NEGATIVE TRENDS. WE ARE PREPARED TO HELP, DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY, BUT ONLY IF THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM MAKES GOOD ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SENSE.

B. TO CAPTURE THE ATTENTION AND SUPPORT OF THE ITALIAN NATION, SUCH A REFORM PROGRAM MUST BE TRULY FORWARD-LOOKING AND EFFICIENCY-ORIENTED. TO ARRIVE AT THIS, THE DC PERHAPS MUST PUT ASIDE OLD WAYS OF DOING POLITICAL BUSINESS, REINVIGORATE ITSELF, AND PROMOTE A NEW IMAGE OF ITSELF. THE LARGE NUMBER OF NEW DC PARLIAMENTARIANS PROVIDES AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE REAL RENEWAL WITHIN THE PARTY AS WELL AS TO CREATE A NEW PUBLIC IMAGE.

C. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE SOCIALISTS RETURN TO COOPERATION WITH THE DC AND ABANDON THE "ALTERNATIVE OF THE LEFT". WHILE RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE PSI, WE HOPE THE DC WILL LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED. WE WOULD THINK IT DESIRABLE, FOR EXAMPLE, TO DEVELOP AN INFORMAL CONSULTATION PROCESS WITH THE PSI IN ORDER TO RENEW A SPIRIT OF MUTUAL CONFIDENCE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES, WHILE GIVING CRAXI AND HIS SUPPORTERS TIME TO WORK OUT INTERNAL PROBLEMS WITHIN THE PSI.

D. THE COMMUNISTS MUST BE KEPT AT ARM'S LENGTH. THE DC SHOULD FIGHT THEM RATHER THAN AVOIDING PUBLIC DISAGREEMENTS THROUGH BACKROOM COMPROMISES. ANY IMPRESSIONS OF A DC/PCI WORKING ARRANGEMENT OR "CONDOMINIUM" WOULD BE A MISTAKE: IT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT US AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES WILLINGNESS TO BE HELPFUL, AND IT WOULD PUSH THE PSI AND SMALL LAY PARTIES TO MAKE THEIR CONFIDENTIAL

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OWN DEAL WITH THE PCI BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

E. SIMILARLY, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE DC TO KEEP UNDER CONTROL THE MINORITY WITHIN THE DC (E.G., GRANELLI - ROME 15248) WHO BELIEVE ITALY SHOULD ASSUME A POSITION OF EQUIDISTANCE BETWEEN THE US AND THE USSR AND WHO WOULD EMPHASIZE RELATIONS WITH THE THIRD WORLD AT THE EXPENSE OF TRADITIONAL ATLANTIC AND EUROPEAN TIES. VOLPE

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